

Barbara Dezmon Scholarship

The Barbara Dezmon Scholarship was established by Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick to honor Dr. Dezmon's unparalleled commitment to and tremendous efforts on behalf of the minority students of Maryland. The student receiving the scholarship has made outstanding contributions to diversity and maintained academic achievement throughout high school.

Natalia E. Miller

(Aberdeen High School, Harford County)

Being a People-to-People Student Ambassador opened many avenues for Natalia by exposing her to other cultures, but it also opened a new view of herself. She has always been accepting of different types of people and engaged in programs like the Talented Tenth that promote diversity and achievement among minorities. However, traveling to other countries has awakened a confidence in Natalia to reach out to all people and partake in the global experience.

Student Excellence Award Winners

Jaymee Gilmore (Fort Hill High School, Allegany County) "She may not know all the answers but she certainly knows where to find them." So says Jaymee's social studies teacher. Jaymee has a number of passions that have instilled in her a competitiveness and drive. Right now, that drive helps her captain the Honor Guard, manage the spring musical, and participate on the debate team; in the future, it will help her reach her goal of becoming a history archivist. Jaymee also has maturity beyond her years, given her brother's battle with cancer and her volunteer work at her grandmother's personal care facility. She has everything she needs to overcome any obstacles.

Isaac Businger (Arundel Senior High School, Anne Arundel County) As a leader, he's fearless; as an academic, he's brilliant; as a musician, he's gifted. But these are the qualities that anyone can see. As still waters run deep, so do the care and humanity Isaac shows his community. Tutoring for more than three years, Isaac has touched the lives of his classmates, the middle and elementary school students living at Sarah's House, a supportive housing program for the homeless, and his church. By reaching out, Isaac has learned the importance of promoting equity in education, but moreover, he has learned the importance of having an understanding ear and helping hand in bringing happiness to a person's life.

Octavia Miller (Mergenthaler High School, Baltimore City) Determination is at the very heart of Octavia. She exudes determination in her academic performance, her extracurricular activities, and her community service. But foremost, she is determined to reach her own goal of going to college. By meeting this goal, Octavia is determined to immerse herself in different ethnic groups and their beliefs and cultures so that she can grow into a woman of great intellect, poise, and excellence.

Sherika McPherson (Woodlawn High School, Baltimore County) Starting a chain reaction of tolerance, understanding, and acceptance is Sherika's goal in leading the Multicultural Club at Woodlawn High. Her ability to see the big picture as well as all the components within it is a quality that will serve Sherika well — in college and in whatever her future holds thereafter. By learning that "It's about the good of the other person that really matters in life," Sherika has gained insight into something that will always guide her to success.

LaShayia T. Kent (Calvert High School, Calvert County) When a student's reputation as a leader in the school community precedes her, what more can be said? In the case of LaShayia, add gracious, grateful, accomplished, valuable, respectful, motivated, and caring, and you begin to see the type of person LaShayia is — not only at school but also in her church, neighborhood, and volunteer activities. Whether she is preparing lunches for Christmas in April or serving in her church youth group ministry, LaShayia knows who she is and what she wants to do — and she will do it.

Teriakie Joseph (Colonel Richardson High School, Caroline County) Building bridges comes easily to Teriakie. As the daughter of a Haitian immigrant, she has had the good fortune of living between two cultures. Because of this, Teriakie has helped fellow Haitian and American students learn about each other's culture. Teriakie has used her fluency in three languages to help Haitian students learn English and help Haitian adults with applications, doctor's visits, and other appointments. As a member of her county's Teen Court program, Teriakie boldly stands by her ethics, despite peer pressure. In her own words, she is "living every aspect of my life to the fullest so that I may lead a plentiful life that is pleasing to God." A noble goal for a noble human being.



Student Excellence Award Winners

Samantha Richardson (Winter's Mill High School, Carroll County) As a founder of the IMPACT Club, Samatha has already shown her determination to take a leadership role in bringing diversity to and eliminating stereotypes at her school. Samantha gave a speech at a school assembly about the historical impact of lesser-known African Americans and she has helped Spanish-speaking students by translating assignments and tests for a freshman Seminar class. Samantha is a goal-oriented young lady who is respected by faculty and peers alike.

Antigone R. Cox (Elkton High School, Cecil County) The name Antigone means "kind and faithful guide," which is precisely what Ms. Cox is. Raised by a single mother on a limited income, Antigone has achieved great things. She ranks fourth in her senior class and has served as Student of the Month, all with sensitivity and a respect for everyone she meets. Antigone has participated in numerous community projects and provided fellow classmates with guidance and support when tackling academic challenges. With intelligence and determination, Antigone has what it takes to succeed in college and beyond.

Aaron T. Jackson (Westlake High School, Charles County) Everyone has felt that magical moment when, suddenly, something makes sense. However, even more magical for Aaron is the opportunity to see a student he has tutored come to the "aha" moment when he or she finally gets a concept or skill that was previously difficult. While he may not seem like a magician, Aaron does spread magic wherever he goes. As a team leader of the Community 1st Pharmacy senior citizen outreach program, Aaron has brought energy and happiness to nursing home residents. Unique and charismatic, Aaron's enthusiasm and commitment to helping others inspire the people and community around him.

Raina M. Cephas (Cambridge-South Dorchester High School, Dorchester County) Louis Pasteur once said, "My strength lies solely in my tenacity." Raina lives by those words every day. She has gone from being a picked-on elementary and middle school student of bi-racial heritage to a high schooler who participates in more than 35 extracurricular activities with the goal of bringing different student groups together. Raina's experiences in high school have opened her eyes to many cultures and people, and she uses this openness to take on leadership roles — for example, drum major of the marching band and president of PRIDE. She is an exceptional young woman who will realize her dream of going to college and changing the world.

Bilguujin Dorjsuren (Governor Thomas Johnson High School, Frederick County) Crossing half the world, learning the cultures and customs of several countries, and suffering many hardships before landing in the United States, Bilguujin has already experienced amazing growth. She is an outstanding student academically and particularly gifted in scientific research. But she is also an extraordinary young woman who has given those near and far the gift of her caring and understanding. After learning that the people from her home country of Mongolia would have to learn English as a second language, she began collecting children's books to help them (more than 500 books have been collected so far). Bilguujin participates in Students Helping Other People, she volunteers at her public library, and she dreams of helping others through science. Bilguujin is an inspiration to us all.

Emily Sisler (Northern Garrett High School, Garrett County) "Diversity is what makes life interesting." For a young woman who is a Best Buddy, a co-captain, a coach, a volunteer, and a counselor, Emily truly lives by her words. Her winning personality is infectious and helps others shine. Whether spending time with her Best Buddy, Rachel, counseling children at Camp Sunrise Mountain, creating books with elementary school students, or volunteering at the blood drive, Emily truly exemplifies an exceptional student and community member.

Jennifer Idokogi (Havre de Grace High School, Harford County) Jennifer is adept at bridging communities and people. As a junior docent at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture and a Hosanna Heritage Camp counselor, Jennifer has fully embraced the mission of creating cross-cultural experiences and educating youth about the history and culture of the African American community. She possesses keen intelligence, courage, sensitivity, compassion, and excellent problem-solving skills — everything a born leader needs to succeed in life. Surely, Jennifer will cross all of life's bridges gracefully.

Wossen Ayele (Atholton High School, Howard County) It was as a member of the Black Student Achievement Program that Wossen first developed a passion for eliminating achievement gaps. This commitment to educational equity became a driving force in Wossen's decision to run for Student Member of the Howard County Board of Education. Through this experience, Wossen has served as a liaison and advocate not just for the immense and diverse student body, but for the entire county's education community. For Wossen, working for educational equity is and always will be a way of life.



Student Excellence Award Winners

Christalyn J. Frison (Kent County High School, Kent County) With two teachers as parents, Christalyn has grown up understanding the value of education. However, it is her determination to set goals and achieve that has made this young woman a model student. As co-chair of the Maryland Teen Advisory Council, Christalyn worked on the Office of the First Lady of Maryland's I Want to Know/Live Clean campaign. Her hard work and dynamic personality make Christalyn a model student who continually makes a difference in her community.

Ashley Bayton (Colonel Zadok Magruder High School, Montgomery County) Ashely credits her Grandma Connie with opening her eyes to her own potential by sharing the words of William James: "Act as if what you do makes a difference." Evoking these words, Ashley was able to turn a negative experience as a freshman into a positive one by establishing Diversity Workshops for all students and being chosen a diversity workshop leader — and that was just her first year of high school. Since then, Ashley has participated in the Sisters In Striving Toward Education Responsibility and Success program and the National Council of Negro Women's Rites of Passage program. She was the 2007 Dr. King Children of the Dream awardee. Indeed, Ashely's actions make a difference.

Olga A. Clara (Parkdale High School, Prince George's County) All it took was the smile on the face of the student she tutored for Olga to realize the best way to help her community is through academic development. She has since dedicated herself to increasing the academic achievement of Hispanic students and raising awareness in her community of the importance of education. Through her example and encouragement, she has helped many Hispanic families and students learn that they are capable of greatness. She is a modern-day hero with greater things to come.

Trevor Boyd (Queen Anne's County High School, Queen Anne's County) Trevor is a consummate leader in academics, athletics, and extracurricular activities. As a Maryland Distinguished Scholar, a member of the National Honor Society, and a participant on "It's Academic," Trevor demonstrates strength in intellect. As captain of the varsity football, baseball, and track teams, he shows strength in character and physical ability. As a member of the Future Business Leaders of America and the Student Government Association, he exhibits strength in duty and service. Throughout his high school experience, Trevor has accepted great challenges and excelled at them all. He is a true leader by any standard.

Ebony Fountain (Crisfield High School, Somerset County) Ebony's philosophy is that positive influences really can change a person's life. As Lt. Colonel Battalion Commander of her JROTC program, Ebony sets a positive example for the cadets she leads and the students with whom she interacts. Whether participating in parades, rallies, and fundraising events or recruiting minority students, she commands respect and dedication because that is how she conducts herself. As a member of the Community Foundation, she helps issue grants to programs that make a significant difference in the community. Ebony is a young woman of distinction because she lives up to her standards in everything she does.

Colvin Young (Great Mills High School, St. Mary's County) The Harrier, Hornet, Pirate Connection (H2P) sounds a little ominous but it's actually Colvin's initiative to mentor middle school students from three feeder schools to help them transition to the high school environment. This is just one example of how Colvin is making a difference. As a gifted singer, disciplined student, and compassionate young man with amazing people skills, Colvin stands at the forefront of his generation's leaders.

Soyunne L. Fernando (Easton High School, Talbot County) "The functions of intellect are insufficient without courage, love, friendship, compassion, and empathy." Soyunne practices this principle in everything he does. As a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, an intern at the Talbot Hospice, and a founding member of the Philosophy Club, Soyunne possesses courage, compassion, and empathy for others as well as keen intellect and skill in science. Soyunne's ability to seamlessly combine these qualities will enable him to excel as he looks toward a career in medicine.

Kiara Robertson (South Hagerstown High School, Washington County) New beginnings can offer a person the chance to rise to new heights. This is definitely how Kiara saw moving from Virginia to Maryland. Since her move, Kiara has exceeded her goals and has become a wonderful role model for minority students. Her involvement with Success and Beyond has shown her what students are capable of when they join together. The group has helped clean up its city and donated time and money to a local homeless shelter. Kiara's commitment to teamwork has also made her shine as part of the track team. Her willingness to commit to a goal and approach it with wholehearted determination is a good indication of how she will approach her future.



Student Excellence Award Winners

Josh White (Wicomico High School, Wicomico County)

As President of the League of Leaders, Josh shares his experience as an accomplished young African American male with elementary school students to help them believe in themselves. He does this because he knows how it feels to have someone believe in your potential. Josh has had many people believe in him and he has earned their respect by believing in himself and passing on to others this encouragement and support. Josh's grandmother told him, "...your character is who you are." As captain of his football team, a mentor, and a tutor, Josh is truly in a league of his own.

Mary (Katie) Serman (Snow Hill High School, Worcester County)

Katie never passes up the opportunity to meet people from different cultures who can give her a better understanding of the world and where she fits into it. She broadens her mind and her horizons by participating in many diverse activities at school, at church, and in her community. She is involved in groups like the Sheriff's Needy Program, the GOLD Foundation, and the March of Dimes. As a volunteer with Sunday School students and senior citizens, Katie has spread her kindness across generations. In return, she has gained a deep understanding of others and a profound respect for all.

Student Excellence Award Nominees

MSDE and AIMMS would like to recognize the 2007 Student Excellence Scholarship nominees for their outstanding academic performance and significant contributions to improving understanding among diverse groups.

Ms. Beatrice Adeoye
Ms. Anissa Alexander
Ms. Bridget Allison
Ms. Romelle Bacon
Ms. Amber Baines
Ms. Danyelle Barnes
Mr. Darren E. Bell, Jr.
Ms. Jazmynne
Brier-Norton
Ms. Britni Briscoe
Ms. Na'kae Chance
Ms. Shyueh-Rwong Cheng
Ms. Kellie Clark
Ms. Raven O. Cook
Ms. Michelle Cromartie
Ms. Whitlee Dean
Ms. Sara Demps
Ms. Sherri Evelyn
Mr. Trevor Favor
Ms. Morgan Garrett
Ms. Lauryn A. Gibbons
Mr. Michael Godana
Ms. Lorraine E. Hamilton
Ms. Katherine D. Hauser
Ms. Jatyra Heath
Ms. Briani Hill
Mr. Nunagnon S. Houssa

Ms. Asya Jones
Mr. Shane Keene
Mr. Terrance Keene
Ms. Morgan Maloney
Ms. Ashley Marshall
Mr. Richard McCarthy
Ms. Camille Meeks
Ms. Natalia Miller
Ms. Annette P. MnKande
Mr. Danny Molock
Mr. JaVaughn Molock
Mr. Nicholas Molock
Mr. Carlos Moya
Mr. Kayu Muigai
Mr. Jamel Mutunga
Mr. Nicholas Neuman
Ms. Angela Nunez
Ms. Glory Ojieri
Ms. Olayinka Oni-Orisan
Mr. Courtney Pegues
Ms. Britney Pope
Mr. Marcus Prather
Ms. Karla Ralda
Ms. Abigail Remo
Ms. Ashley Robertson
Mr. Darrell A. Robinson
Ms. Samantha Robinson

Ms. Estefania Rodriguez
Ms. Jasmine Rogers
Ms. Shamika Rose
Ms. Stacey Sanders
Ms. Jamey Schnepel
Ms. Amie L. Sissom
Ms. Ashley R. Smith
Ms. Brittany Smith
Ms. Courtney Smith
Mr. Brodrick Spencer
Ms. Ashley Stafford
Mr. Cornell Stanley
Ms. Kristina Stephens
Mr. Kyle Tarrant
Ms. Takara Taylor
Ms. Lakeria Todd
Ms. Whitney Torchia
Ms. Anesha Truesdale
Ms. Chioma Uwandu
Mr. Jonte' Valentine
Ms. Laura Vela
Ms. Priscilla Villarreal
Ms. Donna Webb
Mr. Darren D. Williams
Mr. Bin Quan Yang